



# Sophia

providing homes • supporting people

## Trauma Informed Practice



## Some definitions from an Irish Perspective:



TUSLA

An Ghníomhaireacht um  
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach  
Child and Family Agency

### **Tusla, the Irish Child and Family Agency define it as:**

“Building psychological safety, understanding the effects of childhood trauma and adversity and supporting staff wellbeing”



Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte  
Health Service Executive

### **The Health Service Executive National Office for Suicide Prevention describes it as:**

“A trauma-informed approach involves understanding trauma and its impact, creating safe environments, building trusting relationships, supporting choice and collaboration, and focusing on strengths and resilience”



### **Irish Homeless Services have described it as:**

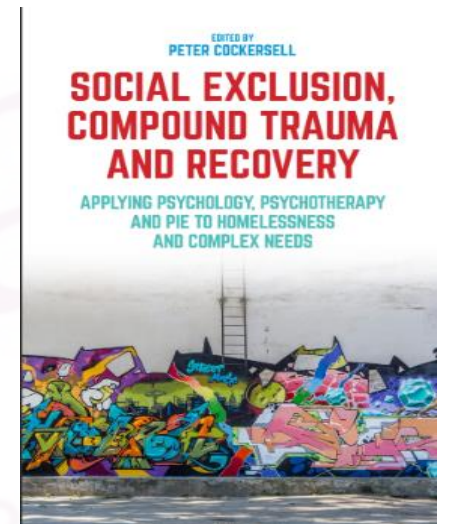
“Compassionate, non-judgemental engagement, recognizing trauma in behaviour (e.g. substance use, withdrawal, anger) and designing environments that reduce power imbalances and increase choice”

## Why is Trauma Informed Practice essential in Homeless Services?

Our experience is, the majority of people in Homeless Services have experienced trauma

So many of the people Sophia supports have had adverse childhood experiences

For homeless services to be effective, they need to acknowledge the impact of trauma and relate in a trauma informed way.



## Trauma Informed Standards in Sophia (Some examples)

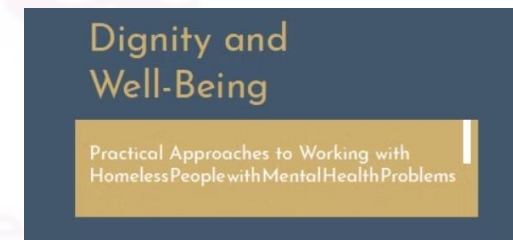
### 1. The Service Environment

- Posters and signs in buildings are positive and strength focused
- There are toys and activities available for the children with artwork from the children displayed on the walls
- The physical environment is non triggering (no strip lights or dark colours)



### 2. Policy Development and Review

A trauma lens is used when developing and updating policies and this involves seeking the views of staff and service users



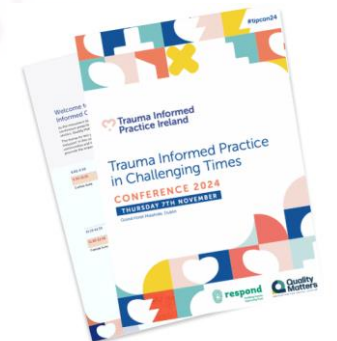
### 3. Staff Recruitment

- Job advertisements and descriptions outline the importance of Trauma Informed Practice and state that staff are expected to work in line with the principles of TIP
- Interview questions are designed in line with Trauma Informed Practices



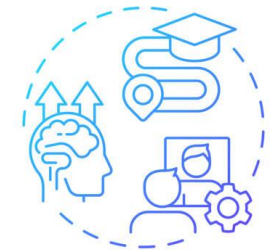
## Training

- Over 120 staff trained in Trauma Informed Practice (inc. receptionists, staff working in finance etc.)
- Specific “Champions” trained who work in various roles across Sophia Housing to drive the practice of Trauma Informed Practice throughout the organisation
- Specific training organised for all managers titled “Trauma Informed Practice, Under Pressure” to recognize the level of critical incidents managers are dealing with and supporting them with this
- Specific training for managers in how to establish psychologically safe environments for their teams.
- Sophia has invested in two staff who have done Train the Trainer in relation to Therapeutic Crisis Intervention. They are now training all support staff in this



## Support for staff:

- Self care workshops (facilitated by a Sophia staff manager) which is open to all support staff
- Having a Self Care Checklist in place for staff
- Reflective Practice groups happening frequently across the teams (with senior managers, project managers and support staff)
- Employment Assistance Programme – available to all staff (confidentially) with counsellors available 24/7 if staff require it



REFLECTIVE  
PRACTICE

**EAP**  
help. when you need it.

# Examples

## 'Seeking Safety'

- Support group for women recovering from trauma and/or addiction
- Group sessions facilitated by a Peer Support Worker and Project Worker.
- The focus of this programme is to work with women to facilitate them, through psycho-educational classes, how to successfully seek safety in their world.



**Seeking Safety Ireland**

### Seeking Safety Women's Support Group

for women recovering from trauma and/or addiction

- Open to all
- Coping skills approach
- 1-1 sessions also available
- Focus on finding safety and stability in your world
- Present-focused, trauma details not discussed

- Peer supporter present
- Topics include: safety, asking for help, healing from anger, healthy relationships, compassion, coping with triggers, and much more...

Positive and therapeutic activities and outings

**Weekly group every Wednesday at 11am**

For referrals please contact  
Emma and Kate  
emurphy@sophia.ie  
087 216 8806

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delivered by Sophia Housing

# Examples

## Residents Forum

- Group of residents meet every 6 weeks from all over Dublin
- Led by the residents who set the agenda and goals for each meeting.
- Goal is collaboration, to drive inclusion, support change management and for Sophia to enhance engagement with our residents.
- Recently voted on changing their title to “resident” from “service user”



## TIC Erasmus and SMES Europa

- This Erasmus Programme was done in partnership with **SMES Europa** and acted as a catalyst for exchange and learning. It also provided Sophia with a means to start a conversation about the **impact of trauma**
- **Sophia** is a member of **SMES Europa**, a **positive network** for the exchange of ideas and learning to support people who are **homeless** and have a **mental health support need**
- Thank you to Jacopo and Siliva for all their work with SMES Europa!



# Challenges with Trauma Informed Practice

- **Underfunding**; difficulties providing services and environments that are trauma informed without adequate funding
- **Burn-out** for our staff dealing with very complex cases
- A lack of **integrated mental health services**
- Language and **Cultural barriers** (especially with migrants in homeless services)





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